

The fix our ferry system needs

I've introduced a one-two combination of bills that would address both the car-ferry and foot-passenger needs of our region.

First, I want state funding for passenger-only ferry service to Kingston and Southworth. The money was included in the House transportation budget last year but was dropped from the final budget. As a result, your tax dollars are going to subsidize passenger rail and "short rail" in Eastern Washington instead. If state funding can't be restored, I want to speed up the schedule for allowing private companies to begin offering passenger-only service using the state route. The law permitting the privatization of passenger ferries was created last year by legislation I introduced.

But even if we restore state-funded passenger-only service, the roads on Bainbridge Island still will be clogged with car-ferry customers looking for better service.

That's why my second bill would require Washington State Ferries to put the equivalent of two super auto ferries on the Bremerton run, restore the popular 5:20 a.m. sailing to Seattle, and add Bremerton runs until they're as close to an hourly schedule as possible.

Two super-class boats would allow far more foot passengers to cross. The combination of that extra capacity and a higher frequency of sailings would do much to make up for the loss of passenger-only ferry service to Bremerton last year.

Washington State Ferries simply isn't responding to the needs of Kitsap riders. We've all seen how the cuts in service to Bremerton over the years have pushed more and more people to the Bainbridge Island terminal. It's time to right the ship. I'm looking for dedicated funding for ferries to bring more stability to the ferry system. If we bring consistent, convenient, high-capacity service to Bremerton, similar to the way it was 30 years ago, I'm convinced the riders will follow, and we'll free up Highway 305 in the process.

**TOWN HALL
MEETINGS**
**Saturday,
February 21**
9-10:30 a.m.
Sheridan Park Recreation Center
680 Lebo Blvd., Bremerton
2-3:30 p.m.
Kitsap PUD
1431 Finn Hill Road, Poulsbo

PO Box 40600
110-B Modular 2 Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

23rd Legislative District

2004 Session Report

**Representative
Beverly Woods**

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Representative

Beverly Woods

February 2004



Dear friends,

Last year I worked with lawmakers from around Washington to pass legislation aimed at reviving our state's economy, putting people back to work, controlling state government spending, and improving ferry service for Kitsap residents. Last month I went back to Olympia

for the 2004 legislative session, expecting to pick up where the 2003 session left off.

By the end of the session, in mid-March, I expect we will have considered new legislation concerning ferry service, Washington's economy, education system and health-care system – important things that influence the quality of life available to residents of the 23rd Legislative District and our state as a whole.

Please take a few minutes to read this brief report on the ongoing session. I welcome your thoughts on the issues it covers, or any other concern you have. Call me using the toll-free legislative hotline, send e-mails, write letters, stop in for a visit if you are in the Olympia area, or come to a town hall meeting Feb. 21. Your government works better when you're involved!

Sincerely,

Beverly Woods

Committees:

Transportation
Capital Budget
Rules
Legislative Transportation
Committee
Joint Committee
on Veterans' &
Military Affairs
Republican Caucus Chair

Olympia office:

110-B Modular 2 Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Telephone:

360-786-7842, or
1-800-562-6000
(Legislative Hotline)

E-mail:

woods_be@leg.wa.gov

Internet page:

[http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/
members/woods.htm](http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/woods.htm)

Legislative information on the Internet:

www.leg.wa.gov

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Let's be smart about spending

Our state's financial picture is much better now than this time last year. Some legislators wanted to increase taxes in 2003; instead, the Legislature ended up making realistic decisions that prevented a huge budget deficit.

This year we will adopt a supplement to cover spending changes that couldn't have been anticipated when the budget was adopted last year – things like higher K-12 school enrollments, or the cost of fighting last summer's wildfires. But we should not spend any more than absolutely necessary. This is no time to commit to big new programs. Instead, let's be smart and pay more attention to building up the state's reserves, to protect taxpayers down the road.

Help Washington prosper again

There are signs that the U.S. economy is rebounding. I want to make sure Washington isn't left behind. We need to make more cost-reducing changes like those that helped convince Boeing to assemble its 7E7 jetliner in Washington. Other employers, like our high-tech industries, are at risk of closing or leaving our state.

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This year I hope to see:

- Changes to the state-run workers' compensation system
- The first increase in the small-business tax credit in 10 years
- Reforms to regulations that make it more costly to do business
- Renewal of tax incentives for high-tech industries before they expire

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Return 'justice' to our civil justice system

Our tort system gives citizens an opportunity to recover damages from those liable. When we talk of the need for tort reform, many people think in terms of the medical industry, and understandably so. Premiums for medical malpractice insurance are soaring, causing an alarming number of health care providers to simply quit or leave our state – which in turn reduces access to health care services.

But the same holds true for almost every other industry. Employers are struggling to pay ever-increasing premiums to protect themselves against lawsuits, and as consumers, we share the burden. It raises the cost of medical insurance, adds to the cost of a new home, and limits options for after-school programs.

I plan to work this session to support almost a dozen reforms to the tort liability laws of our state that would put the "justice" back in our civil justice system. We can and should do better by service providers, consumers and citizens in general, by adopting a fair, predictable and timely process for addressing liability.

Military bases: keep them open!

Washington's nine military bases – three of them local – are vital to our national security and our state economy. The Pentagon has closed 451 military installations in the past 15 years, and the next round of closures will be announced in 2005. I don't want any Washington bases to be on the list.

The last time the Department of Defense did this, I was in charge of the effort to keep Kitsap's bases operating. Last year the Legislature adopted my bill to coordinate a similar effort, at a statewide level. As a member of the Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs, I've been working for months on this. At my suggestion, we are teaming with the state's economic development agency to make a strong case to the Pentagon, similar to the case Washington made to Boeing last year. We simply can't let allow any of our bases to close.

Send a message to sex offenders

Sex offenders are supposed to register with the sheriff when they move into or around our counties. But many are avoiding the requirement. It's an offense that could result in a one-year sentence. However, the typical punishment is 30 days in jail for a first offense, 60 days for a second offense, and six months for a third offense. This isn't deterring sex offenders from violating their registration requirements. We need to make it clear to sex offenders that if we don't know where they are in the community, we will make sure we know where they are — in prison.



Thanks to Don Large and other body-shop owners who testified at the Capitol in support of House Bill 2133, my legislation that would make insurers get your permission if they want to use non-original body parts to repair your car.

Strengthen our public school system

Many Kitsap communities have alternative high schools to serve students who aren't succeeding at traditional high schools. This may be the year that the Legislature gives parents an alternative also – to send their children to "opportunity schools." These offer increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability, and could be a particularly important option in areas where traditional public schools have consistently performed below expectations.

If we're going to have the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), we should do everything possible to make it an effective tool for evaluating the performance of our public schools. In 2003 the House and Senate each adopted different changes to the WASL, which would spell out required standards for high-school graduation, but we couldn't reach agreement. We'll try again this session.